

Take this with a grain of cyanide y'all, as you know where my bias lies, but: here's the point where I've got to with the whole RyuMako debate/debacle (and the RyuMako vs GaMako ship-to-ship combat):

Gamagoori --> loves --> Mako

Mako --> loves --> Ryuko

Ryuko --> loves --> Anyone?? Bueller? Anyone??

Gamagoori gets flowers for Mako at the end, he meets her early on in the series, tries to develop a deeper relationship, shows quite some interest. They have a few scenes together, but she never really seems that into him.

Mako shows loads and loads of affection for Ryuko, groping her, getting nosebleeds in her presence, worshipping her body, etc. etc.. to the point where there's a very small chance of Mako being straight. Maybe bi- or pan- or whatever, but not 'vanilla'. Though, she doesn't seem to have any other lust object/love objects other than Ryuko, so she's kinda a 'single-target' type of gal.

Ryuko never really shows attraction to anyone. She sees Senketsu and Mako as 'bosom friends' (to quote AOGG) and cares very much for her Sister and Father. She gets all red in the face when Aikuro gets naked around her, but she gets that way when she is in skimpy clothes herself at the beginning of the show. It is unlikely to be anything but embarrassment. She is very put off by all the men's ogling of her (and Guts') and of Aikuro's come-ons. In episode 4, she has a smile and a light blush when interacting with that traitor chick, and takes a happy selfie w/her and Mako. So if there was ever attracted to a girl, that'd be the time. Of course that ship is sunk by her being a traitor and all.

Note Ryuko never gets embarrassed/flustered when sleeping in Mako's bed, and there is no sexual subtext between Ryuko and Satsuki. Mako is the one who is always there for Ryuko in tough spots when even Senketsu can't pull through, calming her from berserk mode and 'rescuing' her from her wedding illusion (Senketsu was with Mako that second example). But when being rescued, she doesn't make doe-eyes and take Mako's hand or kiss her, but rather slashes her (and Senketsu) stem-to-stern; which somehow breaks the spell. And Ryuko never blushes around Mako, she doesn't seem to see Mako as a sex object the way Mako sees Ryuko as one. She tolerates Mako's affection because she's happy to have a friend. Now, it is *possible* Ryuko sees here as a potential love-interest, but it is not confirmed. And I believe there were plenty of chances for her to return sexual affection, none of which were used. Mako be like, "I love you GF!!" Ryuko be like, "I love you too Sis!" Folks on Tumblr allus' say stuff like "If Ryuko was a man then it'd be so canon romantic/love/sex/dating"... My point here to make would be that if a man (or woman) in almost any other anime were asked out by their supposed One True Love that they'd been in love with for the whole time, and replied with a mere "Wakata" and a mild grin, showing absolutely no 'red flags' of love, you'd think, "This is a sympathy date."

Whether in 'straight' relationships or in 'yuri' plots, anime girls kiss and cuddle with rosy cheeks and/or longing stares. Ryuko gives Mako friendly and 'tender in a familial way' smiles, with no signs of a turn-on. Again, not the case vice versa. Even in the 'I wanna go on a date with you' spot, it's Mako who's blushing and imagining Ryuko in male attire, not the other way around. And don't give me, "Manly men and Butch women don't show affection in fiction": they sure do, just more in a predatory sort of way, a possession/capture/hunt sort of way, rather than a blushing, weak-in-the-knees anticipation. See Vi in Arcane for example of Butch Lesbian in love. Does Ryuko show this for Mako? No.

So what to make of the 2 kisses Ryuko gets? They are both with females, no? Yes, they are. The kiss with Nui is an odd choice to prove Ryuko's lesbianism. She was "Brainwashed and Crazy" at the time. In the same episode, same day, same frame of mind, she claimed she wouldn't let Mako 'ruin her happiness', which appeared to be marriage to a male groom. Now, if she was a lesbian, how would marriage to a man be 'happiness'? and if Mako was her love-interest, why would reject her pleas to come away with her if she is in the same state as when she kissed Nui? It's all contradictory and messy, as a brainwashed and crazy character would be.

As for the second kiss, that was not on her initiative. Mako kissed Ryuko during her little 'hallelujah' sequence, and neither seemed to enjoy it, especially not Ryuko. She seemed shocked, just as she had a 'WTF?' expression on her face when Mako suggested a date. "But she accepted, that proves she's gay!" Well guys, I think if you are gay, and you have a crush on your friend, you wouldn't have a "Wut" look on your face when that friend asks you out, you'd have a "really?" hopeful-type face I think. I admit, the fact that she accepted to go leaves open the possibility of her being open to that kind of relationship, but it's all so ambiguous.

Also, as brought up many times before by the fans, the fact of Satsuki joining the other 2 makes it seem much more like a 'cute girls doing cute things' outing than a 'I love you stay with me for life' romantic date. It seems kinda like Ryuko is glad to have someone who likes her, but can't exactly like that someone back. Almost as though she only understands sexual love in an intellectual way, not a visceral one. Again, there is no sign of her being 'into' anyone in the whole show, except maybe that one time in episode 4. Slim Pickens.

TL,DR; My opinion on the ship war is thus:

- Gamagoori is in love with Mako, but she ignores him, so it's not gonna happen/not canon
- Mako is in lust/love with Ryuko, ignores all others, and is probably gay

- Ryuko accepts Mako's affection in a 'bosom friend' way, but shows no attraction to anyone in the whole series, so she's probably not gay, or at least has very low libido

Added December 3, 2023: Here's the conclusion of the whole matter: Gays these days say that being gay is all about feelings, not at all about actions. True, Ryuko did act by accepting the date invitation and mentioning it to her mom during their battle. False, she never proclaimed her feelings for Mako or anyone else. She never showed signs of feelings that are agreed upon socially. So by the gays' own definition, she isn't gay. Tho likely still part of the LGBT+ community, being asexual. So there.